

## NEWS RELEASE

October 12, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Southwest Nebraska Seeing More Effects of COVID-19**

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has seen a spike in COVID-19 cases since the beginning of October, and while most of the cases are from direct contact with a known case there is also community spread occurring across the health district. “For several months southwest Nebraska was protected from the COVID-19 pandemic but it is here now and it will take a group effort to slow down the amount of spread we are seeing and to support our hospitals and healthcare providers while we get through this wave of cases,” stated Myra Stoney, Health Director at SWNPHD.

SWNPHD had 146 new cases of COVID-19 reported from October 6th to October 12th at noon. A breakout by county includes: Chase – 54; Dundy – 3; Frontier – 4; Furnas – 11; Hayes – 2; Hitchcock – 13; Keith – 6; Perkins – 8; Red Willow – 45. This brings the totals for the health district to 435 cases with 238 cases recovered. Outbreaks in Red Willow County and Chase County continue to cause the majority of these cases. An additional COVID-19 related death was also confirmed last week.

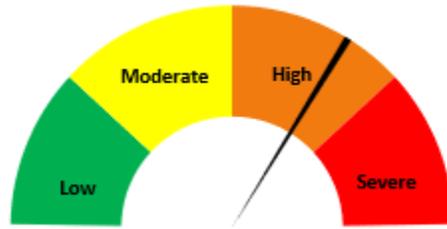
COVID-19 spreads most often in enclosed spaces with poor ventilation, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Most infections happen when a person inhales droplets from a nearby COVID-19 positive person; now research has shown that infections have also happened when a person inhaled airborne particles from an infected person, usually when they were doing activities that involved heavy breathing like singing or exercising.

SWNPHD recommends that residents of the health district avoid crowded indoor spaces and ensure indoor spaces are properly ventilated by bringing in outdoor air as much as possible. Face coverings will also greatly reduce the amount of virus in the air. The CDC has confirmed that in general, being outdoors and in spaces with good ventilation reduces the risk of exposure to infectious respiratory droplets.

The COVID-19 Community Risk Dial for the week of October 12th remains at orange, meaning residents of southwest Nebraska have a high risk of contracting COVID-19. Testing is still available but may require travel. Healthcare systems across the state are burdened by the number of people hospitalized for COVID-19. Wear a mask in public and wash hands and surfaces often. Limit travel and work from home when possible. High-risk and vulnerable individuals should avoid public places.

COVID-19 information is available at [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and [swhealth.ne.gov](https://www.swhealth.ne.gov). You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th St (1 block north of Arby’s) in McCook.

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COVID ORANGE: High Risk of COVID-19 Spread		
General Public	Outside the Home – Work, Social, In Public	At Home
Physical Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stay at home</b> unless traveling for work, medical care, or food</li> <li>• Distance at least 6 feet from anyone outside the home</li> <li>• Work from home if possible</li> <li>• Individual outdoor activities such as walking, biking, etc. are acceptable</li> <li>• Smallest number of contacts feasible</li> <li>• Gatherings only with modifications for COVID-19</li> <li>• Events only as guided by SWNPHD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No distancing for people without symptoms, unless they are under quarantine as a result of being exposed to someone who is infected</li> <li>• Self-isolation of symptomatic persons</li> <li>• Outdoor activities with members of your household are acceptable</li> </ul>
Face Covering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face coverings strongly recommended for anyone over 2 years old</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No face coverings for people without symptoms, unless they are under quarantine as a result of being exposed to someone who is infected</li> <li>• Face coverings for symptomatic people</li> </ul>
Hand Washing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequently wash hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after touching high contact surfaces, sneezing/coughing/touching face, or before eating</li> <li>• Use hand sanitizer when handwashing is inaccessible or infeasible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequently wash hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after touching high contact surfaces, sneezing/coughing/touching face, or before eating</li> </ul>
Illness Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If sick with Flu-like or COVID-like symptoms, <b>Stay at Home</b></li> <li>• Minimize contact with symptomatic people</li> <li>• Daily temperature checks at work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily temperature checks</li> <li>• Monitor for COVID-like symptoms</li> <li>• Contact healthcare provider if sick</li> <li>• Monitor the health of anyone in your home with COVID-like symptoms</li> </ul>
Disinfecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid bare hand contact with any high touch surface</li> <li>• Use barrier such as paper towel or clothing when bare hand contact is unavoidable</li> <li>• Wash hands or apply sanitizer after touching high contact surfaces</li> <li>• Enhanced disinfection, especially for high contact surfaces (door/other handles, light switches, bathroom fixtures)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced disinfection, especially for high contact surfaces (door/other handles, light switches, bathroom fixtures)</li> </ul>
At-Risk or Vulnerable Population	For adults over age 65, anyone with underlying health conditions, and other populations at heightened risk from COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay home as much as possible</li> <li>• Rely on help for needs outside the home (groceries, medications, etc.)</li> <li>• Distance from those working outside of the home</li> </ul>	